

ADDISON ENGINEERS' CUTTING TOOLS MACHINE TOOLS MACHINE TOOL ACCESSORIES GREY IRON CASTINGS

Housing: Space As A Resource

A Matter Of Status

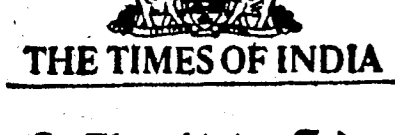
SOME time ago, at the environmental conference in Stockholm, our Prime Minister said that in countries like India the most serious pollution of all was poverty. And one can go further. For it is not just poverty, but the particular forms which poverty takes in our urban areas.

vided, of course, that the family privacy is reasonably assured. In fact, depending on the cost of building construction, this trade-off is automatically adjusted — each society (and each family within it) finding its own balance. This adjustment is of the utmost importance, particularly in developing countries, because they are usually in tropical climates where a number of activities can indeed take place in the open.

grow with the owner's requirements and his earning capacity. Eventually, the owner may want to add an additional floor or two, either for rental or for his growing-up children's families. This would have the additional advantage of increasing the housing densities; though it would entail a certain flexibility in the pattern of infrastructure provided.

40m² on the ground floor, 40m² on the first floor and 20 m² in a barasti room on the terrace).

FOR some time now, Anglo-Indian leaders have been engaged in an acrimonious debate on whether their community is "backward" or not. The two warring groups are from north and south India.



A Thought for Today There is a tide in the affairs of women Which, taken at the flood, leads—God knows where. —Byron

WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS THE international women's year conference, now in progress in Mexico, is the kind of establishment extravaganza that parodies the truth. Speeches, resolutions, exhortation, polemics—these are the stock-in-trade of such ritualistic affairs. Far from advancing the cause of women's rights, it is arguable that they do not pose any serious threat to the status quo—they are held amidst a fanfare of publicity precisely because they are innocuous.

Obviously, there is very little relation between the way our cities are built and the way people use them. Not having the proper range of spaces they need to live, people merely misuse what they do have access to—hence the thousands of families cooking on pavements, defecating along railway tracks and so forth.

The scale of the problem is staggering. By government count, a few years ago, there was a backlog of almost 12 million housing units required in our urban areas alone. To this must be added the fourfold increase in urban population expected over the next three decades. In contrast, our resources—both financial and material—are minimal.

"Renewability" should be one of the prime objectives of mass housing; for, as the nation's economy develops, the housing pattern can change.

In conclusion, it must be emphasised that any investigation of optimal densities is largely determined by the scale of the context we establish. For instance, to a developer looking at an individual urban site, the trade-off between cost of construction and marketability will lead to a somewhat higher level of density, since he is not responsible for the schools, roads and other infrastructure involved in his decision.

The Anglo-Indian community in the south has deflected itself from the AIAlA owing to a difference of opinion on the status of the community. It thinks that the present representation of the community in Parliament is unfair as the member belongs to a biased group.

While our villagers are poorer than urban-dwellers, they are not as dehumanised. The dilemma we face on the one hand, multi-story tenements cost more to construct yet save on transport and other infrastructure costs; on the other hand, low-rise housing costs less to construct but occupies more space.

Multi-storey houses cost more to build but save on transport and other costs; low-rise housing costs less, but occupies more space. The question is to find the trade-off between these two.

In its concentrated form, low-rise housing is the optimal classic pattern of residential land-use in third-world cities. This is because, on the one hand, low-rise housing is associated with a high land-use pattern.

The problem of housing the vast majority of our urban people is not one of finding "miracle" building technologies; it is primarily a matter of re-establishing land-use allocations.

South Indian Anglo-Indians want the Central and state governments to declare the community "backward". On the other hand, the leaders of the all-India Anglo-Indian association (AIAlA), like Mr. Frank Anthony and Mr. A.E.T. Barrow, maintain that the community is not "backward" and that "English is the sole mother-tongue of the Anglo-Indian community".

Devendra Mohan

"Gazetteers Are On Schedule" WITH reference to Mr. P. C. Roy Chaudhury's article on district Gazetteers (June 1), the Gazetteers' unit of Gujarat was started only in 1961 after the formation of the state. In the last 14 years, it has published 11 district Gazetteers.

Forest Resorts WHILE appreciating the point made in your article on "developing" tourist resorts (June 1), your contention that the big concrete blocks were constructed just to attract tourists is difficult to accept.

OPEN FORUM Nagarkar has missed many other important points and glaring mistakes. M. L. KAUL Srinagar

Islam & Modernism APROPOS of A. A. F. F.'s review of Jamil Hanif's book Islam and the Transformation of Culture (May 18), it is the wishful thinking of both the author and the reviewer that made them close their eyes to the Islamic awakening in the Muslim world.

Punjabi In Delhi IN her remarks on Delhi TV centre's identity, Amrita Malik (May 25) frets over the pollution of the cultural cosmopolis following a four-part Punjabi serial programme.

Allahabad And After THERE is no doubt at all that the Allahabad high court decision caught AIR on the wrong foot. As has already been mentioned, it was a bad day altogether for news; the Gujarat elections, the passing of D. P. Dhar and the Air France Boeing mishap.

Art Schools THE article, "How Not to Teach Art" by Mr. Baburao Sadvelkar (May 25) should serve as an eye-opener to the art authorities in Maharashtra as well as Gujarat.

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Charles M. Correa

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Amita Malik